

Walking the Fitness Trail Hand in Hand with Our Community

STORY ABSTRACT:

In order to meet the need for increased physical activity and environmental awareness among our students, Lincoln-Erdman is developing a fitness and environmental trail that will be open to not only our student population but to families, neighbors, and the community at large. Although the trail has been started and much background planning is done, the physical completion of the trail has just gotten underway. There has been much support and collaboration from school families and businesses and an increase in both physical and environmental awareness and participation. As the trail development continues, it is expected that participation will increase as well.

PROBLEM OVERVIEW:

According to the American Medical Association, childhood obesity is an increasingly serious problem and a Cornell University study suggests that if you want your children to grow up to actively care about the environment, give them plenty of time to play in the "wild" before they're 11 years old.

In an attempt to address these statements in a positive, fun-filled way, Lincoln-Erdman is in the process of developing a ½ plus mile fitness trail that circumnavigates the playground and the attached school nature area. It is hoped that the trail will help students develop an appreciation of remaining physically fit while building a sense of pride and responsibility of taking care of our environment. This trail will also be available to the public during non-school hours. Thanks to the support of students, parents, and local businesses, we have moved beyond the beginning stages. However, there is still much work to be done.

PROGRAM/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

An arboretum, built by volunteers, has been erected at the start of our trail. Physical fitness stations have been designed and funds are in the process of being raised so that construction can be completed. The "Do-Dads", a group of volunteer Dads, have been busy cutting non-native trees and replanting other trees to areas in the front of our school. A local landscape business has dug out an area so that run off from the blacktop parking and play areas can be used to help create natural wetlands. Fruit and nut trees have been purchased and planted. These areas, along with a native prairie, hardwood forest, and pine woods area will create a natural surrounding that walkers can appreciate as they follow the trail around the school grounds. Plans are being developed for an incentive program for students who walk the ½ plus mile fitness trail at least once weekly.

A record keeping system will be developed so that those meeting long distance goals will be recognized as well as rewarded with healthy snack options based on the Wisconsin cities to which they "walk". Classroom teachers will track and encourage all students to participate throughout the year. School families and neighbors will be encouraged to use the trail during non-school hours. Invitations will be extended to both groups to make sure they are aware of the availability of the trail for their use.

PROGRAM/ACTIVITY OUTCOMES:

Many businesses, neighbors, and school families attended the kick-off to our fitness trail. After the kick-off, many took the opportunity to walk the trail and envision the proposed goal that was shared. Already many teachers have increased the use of the environmental trails, which includes walking the students to the nature area as well as taking part in their grade level environmental studies.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

John A. Pfaff
Principal
Lincoln-Erdman Elementary
Phone: 920-459-3595
E-mail: jpffaff@sheboygan.k12.wi.us